

Voicing The Voiceless in Arun Sharma's *The Wolf Man*

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Abstract

The Wolf Man of Arun Sharma, one of the modern playwrights of Assam was first written in 1965. The play is centered on the character of Romu who fights for self-identity in a society mostly occupied by selfish hypocrites. In the play the word 'wolf' is used as symbol of the uprooted people. When a society marks someone as uprooted or other, he/she has to engage in a continuous fight to create and establish an identity. In the play Romu has undergone the same crucial situations and has been inhumanly exploited by the mainstream society. Attempt has been made in this paper to critically examine the marginalization of Romu and his identity crisis.

Key Words: Uproot, marginalization, identity crisis

I. Introduction

The formation and process of shaping of identities in social and cultural contexts is a major preoccupation in the disciplines of humanities and social-sciences. Identity is a way of making sense of who an individual is and what are his or her beliefs, tastes or values. However, the identity of an individual is constructed and determined by wider social, cultural, political and economic contexts. Identity may be reinterpreted or imposed upon a particular group or an individual by an authority which is resulted from power inequalities. It has been proved that identity has a close kinship with marginality. Marginalized people often face complex choices in defining and enacting their own identities. They may choose or feel compelled to assimilate to the norms and values of the dominant class. Alternatively, the marginalized group may choose to uphold a separate identity in contrast to the dominant norm and act this out as demonstrably as possible. Such a stance, however, may lead to a complete isolation and repressive backlash from the dominant group. In reality, marginalized people are living traumatic life, negotiating at the same time

complex relationships with various mainstream groups.

Arun Sharma in his play *The Wolf Man* portrays the traumatic life of Romu who has been adapted by Prof. Ashok Chaudhury from Ramsang Forest, thinking him as the last living one of the wolf man species. Unfortunately, Romu remains as an object of research only. He is deprived of all other facilities given to a human child. Sharma has treated well the identity crisis of the character of Romu who is marginalized by the mainstream group. From his part, Romu tries to assimilate with the mainstream, but he fails drastically. Towards the end of the play it is seen that Romu has chosen the alternative way by returning to his original identity.

II. Identity Crisis in Arun Sharma's *The Wolf Men*

Arun Sharma's play *The Wolf Man* was written in 1965. The play was first published in an Assamese magazine *Nilacal*. In the preface of his play Arun Sharma writes-

The play is written taking a wolf child as its central character. From certain perspectives, the wolf child represents the minority people living across the world. It

is also trying to depict what happens when the uprooted people become minorities. (164)

The central character of the play is a wolf boy named Romu. The word wolf is used to symbolize uproot or one having no identity. The story narrates the identity crisis of Romu as someone from marginalized group.

The wolf men is a group of human beings who coexists with the real wolves inside the Ramsang forest. Long ago, two human children were swept away by a flood and found their shelter among the wolves. Gradually, a clan was formed inside the jungle. As they were adapted by and coexisted with the wolves, their manners and behaviours resembled more to wolves than human beings. However, in the course of time they had to engage in wars against the wolves for the sake of food. Most of them died in such struggles because they were few in number. The playwright uses the term wolf men as symbol to represent the uprooted people. Romu is one such uprooted person from a marginalized group. He was rescued at an early age by Ashok Chaudhury, a professor of Anthropologist in a university. He was named after the Great Romulus of Roman Empire. However, Romu remained a part of Prof. Chaudhury's research only. He was kept outside the mainstream. He was barred from getting education in the famous Great Heart school to which children from aristocratic family generally went. Nripati Baruah, a so called aristocrat of the town took the initiative to rusticate Romu from all kinds of ways of social inclusion. Moreover, he did never mind to exploit Romu by snatching away his life time achievement. Romu had already become an expert in scientific inventions and discoveries. Nripati Baruah used this natural genius of Romu for his son's benefits. Romu ceaselessly worked and discovered and proved the third law of Mendel. He exclaimed in joy:

Romu: I've got it. I can now demonstrate how the attachment of Transfer RNA and Messenger RNA template takes place- I've got it. (Sharma 124)

But, the newspapers published the discovery as a work of Nripati Baruah's son Dilip. Romu's effort was not acknowledged anywhere. *The Wolf Man* not only depicts the identity crisis of the uprooted people but also the way they have been exploited by those in power. Romu is recognized as 'other' as he doesn't belong to the mainstream society. When Prof. Chaudhury enquires the reason of Romu's exclusion, Baruah replies-

Baruah: One should be born into a particular society or at a particular place to be eligible for the national award...Romu has no national status or identity. (Sharma 213)

Arun Sharma depicts how Romu is recalling his days of coexistence with wolves in Ramsang forest in such a situation. He identifies Nripati Baruah with a wolf who has taken away the desired meat from his mouth. At once, Romu picks up the sharp piece of stone and wishes to plunge it directly into Baruah's forehead. He considers Chaudhury selfish too who has never been helpful to him. Towards the end of the play Romu is found struggling to return to his identity. He no longer wants to be a part of the mainstream as he realizes its exploitation. However, Sharma doesn't disclose whether Romu's attempt receives success or not.

III. Summary of Findings and Conclusion

The study of "Identity Crisis of Uprooted People in Arun Sharma's *The Wolf Man* can be summarized into a few points. These are-

Arun Sharma with the representative character of Romu in his play *The Wolf Man* brings into light the real issues of the minorities who have been exploited by the majorities in various

ways. Romu is one of those thousand voiceless who have been subsided to the margin by the majorities.

Although the play is focused on the identity crisis of the uprooted people but, the playwright is equally concerned with deprivation of the marginalized section from the socio-economic benefits.

The social prejudice nurtured by the major group deprived uprooted persons from social inclusion. In the play Nripati Baruah rejects Romu's acknowledgement only because Romu's definite identity is not known to him.

Through the play Sharma suggests forming of a separate identity as an alternative way to

tackle the question of social inclusion. However, he leaves his reader to find out whether it will prove to be an effective one or not.

Arun Sharma's *The Wolf Man* is a successful play which brings into light the serious issue of marginal people. With the help of the character of Romu, Sharma puts forward the status of the marginalized people and their conflict in the mainstream society. Sharma not only highlights the conflicts of such people, but also the evil views nurtured by the mainstream culture towards them. In the concluding part of the play it is found that marginalized Romu recognizes the evils of the society and raises his voice against them.

References:

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